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Hollowell, James Hirst

Facts for the coming struggle

Nottingham

1884

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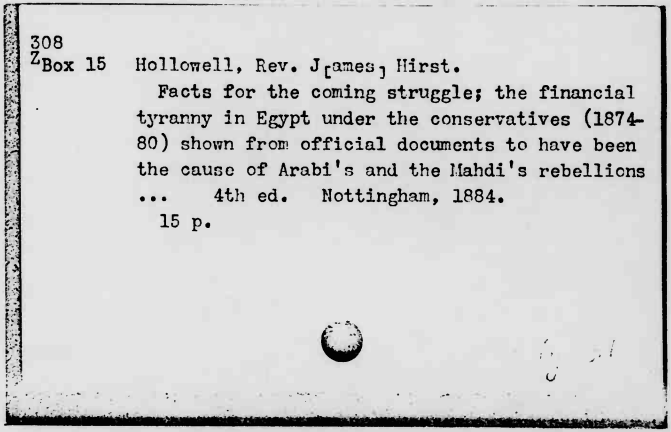

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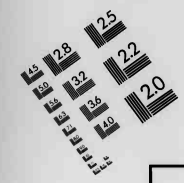

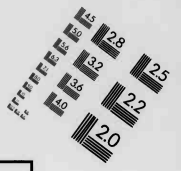

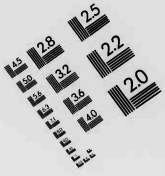

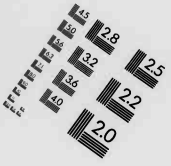

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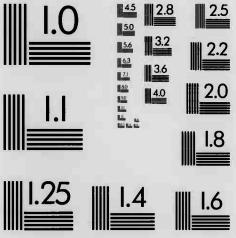

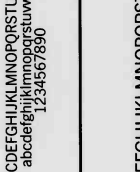

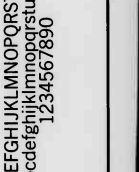

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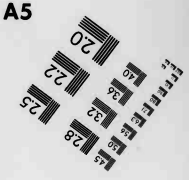

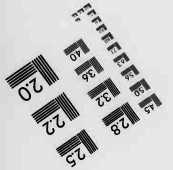

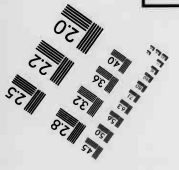

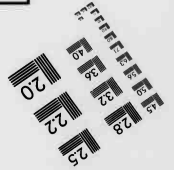

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Financial Tyranny in Eg

under the Conservatives

(1874-80.)

SHOWN FROM OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS TO HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF ARABI'S AND THE MAHDI'S REBELLIONS, AND OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN EGYPT.

BY THE REV. J. HIRST HOLLOWELL

FOURTH EDITION.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

NOTTINGHAM:
PRINTED BY R. B. EARP, MARKET STREET AND FRIAR LANE.

1884.

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While dissenting from some of Mr. Seymour Keay's views, especially as to the responsibility of Mr. Gladstone's Government for the state of Egypt, the writer would express his great obligations to him for the facts disclosed in his recent work on Egypt.

Quantities may be had at a large reduction.

All communications to the Author, at

WELLINGTON SQUARE,

PARK SIDE,

NOTTINGHAM.

16 Sept 1915 MS.

The Financial Tyranny in Egypt.

(1874-80.)

"We cannot allow the history of the last four years to slip away from the memory of the people."—*Speech by Lord Salisbury at Plymouth, June 5, 1884.*

THE question of Egypt must be fought out. Local managers of the Liberal party have been very shy of it, and this shyness, reticence, indifference, carelessness, or whatever it may be, may cost us dear. The supposition that the next election will be fought on the Franchise question only is not well founded. Egypt will be one of the critical issues. If that be so, the words at the head of this communication must be turned against the man who spoke them by the conscience of the country.

Does Lord Salisbury suppose that we shall allow the four years—the six years—during which he and his late master managed matters in Egypt to "slip away from the memory of the people?" If we do, we shall deserve to incur the penalty usually visited upon those who keep the people in ignorance. If Liberals are content to allow Mr. Gladstone's position to be weakened by falsehoods which they will be at no pains to confute, all that they hold dearest in public morality and progress must suffer as the result. Never since Veracity "marked him for her own" has Lord Salisbury uttered a political falsehood so shameful as the following words spoken at Plymouth on June 5, 1884:—

"If when the first news of Arabi's conspiracy reached this country [it had been suppressed] *Egypt would now be in the same smiling and prosperous condition in which we handed it over to the present Government.*"

One only wishes it were possible to expose before every political meeting in the country during this year the heartless disregard for truth shown in the words quoted. I wish to point out, in few words, what "*the smiling and prosperous*" state of Egypt was when Mr. Gladstone had the sorrow to become responsible for affairs in that land.

I.—Beginnings of Trouble. (1875.)

In 1875, the Right Hon. Stephen Cave, who had been sent by Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet on a special financial mission to Egypt, reported to Lord Derby that the taxes laid on the peasantry for 1875, amounted to £10,689,070. In 1864 they had amounted to £4,937,405!

The debt of Egypt was now about £90,000,000. The speculators in bonds had in every way encouraged the Khedive to borrow, and had bribed the Sultan to permit him to do so. [Parliamentary paper, 2,395, of 1879, p. 50.] A bribe of £900,000 was laid at the Sultan's feet on one day, a transaction of which Sir Henry Elliot speaks with sorrow. (Ibid. p. 31.)

The population of Egypt was five millions. Its annual revenue averaged from eight to nine millions. Its peasantry depended on the bounty of one river for their all. Yet upon this suffering people—will it be believed?—the speculators and the Khedive laid a burden of £90,000,000 of debt. And at what interest? The minimum was 12½ to 13 per cent., the maximum was 26½ per cent. (P.P., 1425 of 1876, p. 7.) This was the beginning of the "smiling" and the "prosperity."

Seventy per cent of the gross revenues were swallowed up in interest alone. Five to six millions had to be raised for interest every year, and Mr. Cave reported to Lord Derby that the peasantry were paying three years' taxes in two years. (Ibid. p. 9.)

II.—European Control. (1876-77.)

The half-yearly coupons of the debt were paid with extreme difficulty. "To secure the punctual payment of the debt charges," a European Control Department was appointed.

In 1876, the bondholders sent Messrs. Goschen (who contracted the first two Loans to the Khedive and whose policy now, in 1884, should be watched) and Fruhlings to urge the Government to bring pressure on the Khedive in order to secure said punctual payment. Ultimately the Government of Lord Beaconsfield instructed their Consul-General to use unofficial pressure. (P.P. 1484 of 1876, pp. 68 and 77.)

Egypt now begins to "smile" on one side of its mouth. Under "pressure" the Khedive allows two European comptrollers *to receive and audit the whole revenue of the State.* This is in November, 1876. Mr. Gladstone protests. That should be remembered.

By July, 1877, the Khedive says he has no money. He tells our Consul that the taxes are being collected from the peasantry twelve months in advance. Our Consul-General thereupon uses threats, that is to say, he employed the authority of the British Government in order to force the Khedive to wring more money from the people; and while doing so he wrote a dispatch, which Lord Salisbury and Lord Beaconsfield must have read, from which the former seems to have inferred that the effect of his policy in Egypt was

"To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land."

The Consul-General wrote: "The coupon was paid up yesterday." "Ruinous sacrifices are being made by the peasantry." "Forced sales of growing crops." "Taxes are being paid in advance." "And all this must be wrung, in some shape or other, from a country already crushed by taxation!" (P.P. 2233 of 1879, pp. 72 and 73.)

III.—Desperate Measures. (1877.)

But all this time there were 100,000 Europeans in Egypt who paid no taxes at all. Indeed, they smuggled taxable articles into the country, and thus cheated the Revenue in two ways. The Khedive asked Lord Beaconsfield's Government to help him in the matter, but seven months passed before any—and then an evasive—reply was sent. (Ibid. pp. 94 and 155.)

In utter perplexity, the Khedive made a mad offer to the farmers, that they should pay *six years' land tax in*

advance, and then they should be permanently freed from half the land tax in 1885. On faith of his word the oppressed cultivators advanced seventeen millions sterling. This was the famous law of Moukabala. But with the knowledge and sanction of Lord Salisbury—author of smiling prosperity—that law was repealed, and faith with the cultivators broken. (P.P. 2766 of 1881, p. 9.) The advanced taxes were held, and the future remission promised was refused. Need one wonder that revolution followed at no long interval?

In September, 1877, the British Government heard from their Consul-General that if the bondholders' coupon of January 1st were paid to date, the greater part of the taxes for 1878 would be swallowed up to pay it. He added these ominous words:—"There is less than nothing left to pay the expenses of Government. The pay of the *employés* is already in arrear. Collapse is impending."

To make this plain, the following is the account of revenue and expenditure for 1877: Revenue—£9,543,000. Expenditure—To bondholders, £7,473,000; Tribute to Sultan, £1,000,000; For Home Government, £1,070,000! In April, 1878, the Khedive begs for delay. Lord Salisbury (P.P. 2,233 of 1879, p. 194) at once wrote insisting upon the payment of the next coupon. Lord Derby had resigned the Foreign Secretaryship a month before, and he would be very rash who supposed that the state of Egypt had nothing to do with the step Lord Derby took. There were Egyptian as well as Bulgarian horrors.

IV.—Starving the Natives. (1878.)

By August, 1878, Mr. Rivers Wilson and M. Blignières, representing England and France, were virtual dictators of Egypt. By threats and "pressure" Lord Salisbury and M. Gambetta had had them appointed Finance Minister and Minister of Public Works respectively. The Khedive pledged himself never to act in opposition to his Ministry. Native servants were now replaced by Europeans. This was done wholesale, and gave the greatest offence. 500 native servants were dismissed in a few months. Before Lord Salisbury and his colleagues had handed the smiling land over to Mr. Gladstone, they

had 1,200 European officials placed in Egypt whose annual salaries were in the aggregate £300,000. And this £300,000 was nearly all taken out of the paltry, starved Budget of the Home Government, which received for all purposes only about 2½ millions per annum, while the bondholders, backed up by the Beaconsfield and Gambetta Governments, ran off with about 5½ millions.

The Egyptian troops could not be paid out of an empty Treasury, and the arrears of their pay at the beginning of 1878 were such as to make them murmur. The European officials were, however, punctually paid. A person named Keller, in the employ of the Egyptian Government, being seven months' wages in arrear, sued the Government for the amount in the Mixed Court and obtained a decree. Armed with the decree, and being still refused payment, he seized the Treasury chest. But this did not suit our Consul-General, who wrote home to the ConservativeGovernment that if this decree were confirmed it would "weaken the decrees which *protect the Bondholders*." (P.P. 2233 of 1879, p. 100.)

The English Comptroller, Mr. Rivers Wilson, was not basking in the smiles of the national prosperity. It was reserved for Lord Salisbury, six years afterwards, to see those smiles, from the platform of an excited meeting at Plymouth. Mr. Wilson reported in 1878 (8th Feb.), that the *inhabitants were almost starving*, that the Poll-tax, *levied on every male over twelve years of age, had been doubled*, reducing most persons to poverty at once, and that the tax on trades and professions had been quadrupled. (P.P. 2233 of 1879, p. 137.)

Under repeated threats, the Khedive at length, in March, 1878, allowed the appointment of a Commission of six Europeans, to inquire into the financial situation of Egypt.

The Khedive's private estates (485,131 acres), and 300,000 acres of the Crown Lands, were now taken and held as security for the creditors of Egypt. The kingdom was rapidly becoming mortgaged to private persons.

By November, 1878, a coupon of two millions sterling was due to the bondholders, and it could not be met. Pressure from the agent of Lord Beaconsfield's Govern-

ment again forced a smile from the pale lips of Egypt. All the Khedive's remaining property, including his cattle and implements, was taken from him, and the Control gave him a Civil List in place of it.

On the 8th January, the Consul-General writes:—"An empty Treasury and a ghastly amount of debt." (P.P. 2397 of 1879, p. 7.) "No debt worth naming being wiped off."

V.—Smiling Revolution. (1879.)

The revolution may be scented in the next incident by the dullest political nostril. The Financial dictators cannot see where the next coupon is to come from. Somebody can. As a beginning they decide to starve the army, already in arrears of pay. At one stroke, 2,500 *officers were retired on half-pay*, before their arrears had been settled! (P.P. 2397 of 1879, p. 26.) But the plot thickens. Half-pay could not clear the coupon. The smile must therefore broaden into a grin. Egypt shall not go unhappy. The Salisbury policy is to make a nation enjoy its own ruin. So forced labour is imposed upon a more respectable class of Fellahs than had before been subject to it; but with the proviso that persons might purchase exemption. This was of course a trick to get money out of the richer sort of persons by threatening to treat them as we treat able-bodied male paupers in the labour-yard of our Workhouses.

But the burden begins to tire the camel. On 11th January, 1879, a deputation of Sheikhs—the most influential and respected persons in the districts from which they come—arrives in Cairo. They protest against the pressure now being used to get in the taxes. What that pressure was we shall soon see. The land is not smiling, evidently. Lord Salisbury must make haste, for he has to hand over Egypt to Mr. Gladstone in a year from this time, and if he is to hand it over in a state of smiling prosperity he must really make more progress.

The European ministers sent the Sheikhs home *with nothing*, but the army was always at home in Cairo. An ugly scene in the streets is now its contribution to an ill-understood subject. On the 18th February, 1879, *four hundred* officers head a crowd in Cairo. They do more.

They pull our Mr. Rivers Wilson out of his carriage and hold him prisoner in the Ministry of Finance. The Khedive came and released him, or worse might perhaps have followed.

This kind act of the Khedive only made Lord Salisbury more reckless. It showed the Khedive to be too powerful. He at once decided to exclude the Viceroy from the Council of Ministers (P.P. 2397 of 1879, p. 38.), and to give to the two European ministers an absolute veto in the Cabinet. This reduced the Khedive to a mere cipher.

Nubar Pasha told our Consul that the danger was by no means over. The Khedive warned him of serious discontent in upper Egypt. But the Financial despotism learned no lessons. The coupon due in the middle of May, 1879, was premptorily demanded.

Meanwhile rumour had passed up the Nile that the Moukabala would be abolished. This law had enacted that if six years' land tax were advanced at once that tax should be permanently reduced 50 per cent. in 1885. A secret Report of Mr. Wilson's announcing this nefarious breach of faith got into wrong hands, became known, and carried dismay to every cultivator up to the second Cataract. (Ibid. pp. 66 and 72.) The cry of "*Death to the Christians!*" was heard. (Ibid. p. 86.) The discontent and anger had become national. That is to say, translating into the dialect of the Plymouth platform, Egypt now *smiled* from one end to the other.

VI.—The Khedive Deposed. (1879.)

On the 7th of April the Khedive dismissed the two European Ministers, assigning "the discontent of the country" as his reason. On the 14th April, the officers of the army took an oath to "resist all the enemies of the country." The Khedive was urged to reinstate the Ministers, but he refused. The indignant protests of the population forbade it. But Lord Salisbury had his weapon prepared. He and France together compelled the Porte to depose the Khedive, and to set up Tewfik in his stead.

The effect of this may be imagined. The people saw their Ruler deposed simply that foreigners might lay hands upon the best of the taxes. The new Khedive was

to these people only the odious symbol of a Financial Tyranny.

VII.—The Whip and the Bastinado. (1879.)

Brutal means were now used to get in the taxes. I can only summarise:—P.P. 2549 of 1880 contains more detail. The people had not the means of paying the taxes, collected in some cases a year before they were due. Large estates were, therefore, *compulsorily* sold. Poor peasants were driven with their cattle to the markets, followed by their families. Those who could not, or would not, meet the extortionate claims were tied to the whipping post and publicly flogged, or fastened in the bastinado and whipped over the soles of their feet. Lord Salisbury heard from the Consul-General that there were very few defaulting persons in prison. He did not conceal the reason. These are his own words—reflecting the sunshine of a smiling land:—"*the use of the whip being found more expeditious and effective.*" (Ibid. p. 25.)

Still the Treasury was nearly empty. The current coupons could not be met in full without systematic cruelty and plunder.

VIII.—Liquidation of the Debt. (1879.)

I must ask particular attention to the fact that just before Mr. Gladstone received Egypt from Lord Salisbury's fond embrace, Lord Salisbury had to confess before Europe that his policy had been a ruinous failure. He had to call together a Commission of the Powers to liquidate the debt. He had driven the people so nearly to desperation that he had to invoke the aid of International Authority to reduce the burdens pressing upon the Egyptians.

If Mr. Gladstone is censured for calling in the European Powers in 1884, let it be remembered that in 1880 Lord Salisbury assembled a Commission composed of one representative each from Italy, Germany, and Austria, and two each from England and France.

This Liquidation had the following results:—

(1). It reduced interest on the Debt to 4 per cent.

(2). But it increased the nominal amount of Debt.

(3). It arranged for 45 per cent. of the gross revenues still to go to bondholders.

(4). It robbed the cultivators of £17,000,000 advanced to redeem a moiety of land tax, and also robbed them of that moiety—£1,700,000 per annum for ever.

It had the further result of making Mr. Wilson's secret recommendation public property, and this proved to be fuel for a general conflagration of hatred and passion.

IX.—Mr. Gladstone's Policy. (1880-82.)

Mr. Gladstone had not been in office many months when Arabi Bey surrounded the Khedive's palace with 2,500 soldiers, and charged the Khedive with selling the country to the English. He had already released three colonels from prison by force.

Such was the smilingly prosperous state in which Mr. Gladstone took Egypt out of Lord Salisbury's hands. The latter statesman stands convicted, therefore, of a disregard for truth which would be amazing if we did not remember how he authorised Lord Lytton to find a pretext for a war with Afghanistan, and publicly stated that the Zulas had invaded Natal.

Lower and Upper Egypt, and the Arabs of the White Nile, 1,500 miles distant from Cairo, had determined upon active measures of resistance before Mr. Gladstone put his hand on the helm of State in 1880. He found two Revolutions ready to break out, the direct and undeniable fruit of the financial tyranny of the Salisbury policy. Can anything be more mendacious or cowardly than to hold Mr. Gladstone responsible for the disorder and chaos created by those who went before him?

X.—Why did Mr. Gladstone make War?

He did so most reluctantly. This is indeed Lord Salisbury's charge. Mr. Gladstone did not put down Arabi promptly and savagely enough. No! Mr. Glad-

stone does not relish—to his honour he shrinks from—hostilities against the misguided leaders of an oppressed people. British opinion will forgive him that noble hesitation to shed blood.

But Lord Salisbury and his master had entered into such covenants with France that Mr. Gladstone had only three courses open to him:

1. To resign office and refuse to touch Egypt.
2. To make such concessions to Arabi as would have amounted or led to repudiation of French interests in the Debt. These interests are serious. France has 180,000 holders of Egyptian Bonds. This might have meant war with France.
3. To restore public order, and when he had restored it to enter upon the humane task of progressively reforming the political and financial situation.

Mr. Gladstone chose the third alternative. By a reluctant but effective stroke of arms he quieted Egypt to about the Second Cataract—a distance of at least seven or eight hundred miles up the Nile from Alexandria. Arabi Bey had demanded a European Constitution and a native army of 18,000 men. It would have been madness to grant it. Indeed, England was so tied up with France in the dual control of Lord Salisbury that Mr. Gladstone—who had never been in favour of, and had condemned beforehand that control—could not have granted it. Constitutional government and power of the army are only for free peoples. Egypt had never been free, and Lord Beaconsfield's and Lord Salisbury's policy had sunk her to the level of a nation of slaves.

Mr. Gladstone could not leave Egypt to shift for herself. In that case either Turkey or France would have become paramount in a country where England could not consent to see either supreme. But the story of what Mr. Gladstone has done for the good of Egypt must now be rapidly sketched.

XI.—Mr. Gladstone the Friend of Egypt.

After quieting disorder and keeping the Arabs from getting control of the Red Sea ports, Mr. Gladstone's hostilities ended.

1. The attempt to re-conquer the Soudan in Hicks Pasha's campaign was one he never sanctioned. He will make none of his own. The brave Arabs, peopling a nearly barren region which measures from Assouan to the Equator 1,650 miles, are fit to be a nation by themselves, and have been plundered by the Pashas too long. Lord Salisbury's policy of extortion stung them to madness, for they had to find *their* full share of the Coupons. Let those who want the Soudan do the fighting to get it. Sir Samuel Baker, who now advocates its seizure by England, was himself offered £1,000,000 by a syndicate of Englishmen if he would establish a Government in *their interest* in the Soudan. What was his reply? "*I refused, for no consideration on earth would I embark on any such enterprise.*"*

Mr. Gladstone's refusal to take the Soudan by force of arms will one day be remembered as a great service to humanity and righteousness.

2. Mr. Gladstone restored a native ministry.
3. He extinguished the Dual Control.
4. He created a new native army.
5. He sent General Gordon to make peaceful terms with the Arabs—and for this alone. Gordon is not being abandoned, and if the untiring efforts of the Government to bring him back only succeed, Tory criticism will find its only shaft snap in its hands.
6. Mr. Gladstone has greatly reduced the number of European officials.
7. He has made foreigners bear their share of taxation.
8. He has abolished forced labour.
9. He has stopped brutality in the collection of taxes.

XII.—Mr. Gladstone and the Conference. (1884.)

Egypt gets more deeply in debt every year. The accumulated deficits of 1881-82-83-84 leave her now £8,000,000 to the bad (besides the great debt of £80,000,000!) Why? Because the best Railways, Telegraphs, Port Dues, and Taxation of the Provinces all

* THE SOUDAN: by the Earl of Dunraven. Simpkin & Marshall.

go to the Bondholders, and *cannot*, by Lord Salisbury's Liquidation of 1879, *be touched for the national expenditure.* For 1884, the Bondholders' revenue shows a surplus of half-a-million, while Egypt herself is £8,000,000 behind!

Mr. Gladstone proposes to lend Egypt the £8,000,000, and then make the Bondholders' revenues pay the interest on it. That is expected to be over £300,000 a year.

This is not a suddenly suggested idea. In August, 1882, Sir Auckland Colvin anticipated this loan of £8,000,000 (P.P. 17 of 1884, p. 4) in a memorandum to Government.

But Egypt must spend more on herself, consequently Mr. Gladstone may ask the Bondholders to take less than 4 per cent. on the Privileged and Unified Debts. It is high time.

This accounts for the outcry against the Prime Minister. "*A reduction of interest is unnecessary.*"—(*Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna, June 25, 1884.) "*To reduce the interest on the Egyptian debt is to rob* 180,000 *Frenchmen.*"—(*The Paris.* June 25.) "*Reduction of interest is an act of spoliation.*"—(*Journ. des Débats, June* 24.) The *Times* means the same thing when (June 24) it says that Egypt can only be *guided in the right way* by being treated, "*not like a Belgium, but like an Indian Government in the masterful grasp of a Resident!*"

We have seen too much of the "masterful grasp." It means strangulation. Mr. Gladstone says, in other words, "Egypt shall be NEUTRAL GROUND—a Belgium on the Nile! It is time to give her peace, and it is also time to shift part of the burden from her shoulders to those of the men who have made profit out of her miseries."

XIII.—Our Duty.

Let us support Mr. Gladstone's humane endeavour. Too long this incubus of £80,000,000 or £90,000,000 of debt has weighed upon the impoverished peasantry who had no voice in contracting it.

Egypt has long since returned to the bondholders all she actually received, with six per cent. added. Of the sixty millions, she only received forty.

The Conservatives, some few Liberals, and all the unscrupulous financing rings of Paris, Vienna, and London,

want to force Mr. Gladstone to annex the Soudan as a fresh security for illicit pecuniary claims. He has given them his answer in words which deserve to be written in gold. They shall close this sketch, with this one preface. Let us stand firmly in our ranks, and refuse to allow a statesman so noble in his aims to be crushed by men who are not only the enemies of justice in Egypt, but also the enemies of liberty and peace in their own land.

"*We are not willing to be made the instruments of those who, for the sake of millions of sterling money invested in Egypt, are endeavouring by every means they can employ to bring the people of England blindfold into the assumption of immense responsibilities which no man can measure.*"—*Mr. Gladstone's Speech in the House of Commons, Session,* 1884.

XIV.—Failure of the Conference, Aug. 2, 1884.

This is another result of the policy pursued in Egypt under the Conservatives. The selfishness and rapacity which wrung "the uttermost farthing" from the Egyptians from 1874 to 1880 again appear in the French proposals. The Continental bondholders have forced the Government of M. Ferry to refuse a reduction of ½ per cent. (about £400,000 per annum) in the interest of the Debt, and also to refuse the addition of a million sterling to the starved Home Budget. Let Mr. Gladstone now act for himself. The facts once known, England will sustain him.

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